



AP/Wide World Photo (Vahid Salem)

Iranian volunteer militiamen gather for meeting

Hizballah Rising

Iran's Proxy Warriors

By SHANNON W. CAUDILL

While al Qaeda has claimed the world headlines in recent years, Hizballah has established itself in a class of its own—what some terrorism experts call “the best in the business.”¹ In 2006, Hizballah infiltrated Israel, ambushed an Israeli patrol, took two soldiers hostage, fought the Israeli Defense Forces for 34 days, and launched nearly 4,000 rockets into Israel.² The organization is now flush with cash, receiving hundreds of millions of dollars from Iran annually.³ Expanding its influence, the organization is now making inroads into Iraq and the Horn of Africa in a bid to counter American foreign policy interests and further those of its main sponsor, Iran.⁴ In short, Hizballah's stock has never been higher.

Part political party, part humanitarian agency, part paramilitary terrorist organization, Hizballah has planted itself firmly on the radical Islamic landscape. Formed in 1982 during the Lebanese civil war, its genesis initially focused on ending Israel's occupation of Southern Lebanon while promoting an Iranian-based revolutionary Shi'ite-Islamic doctrine.⁵ Its philosophy was laid out in a 1985 “open letter” to the world, a document that has been updated and amended over the years to reflect the organization's growing ambitions. In the letter, Hizballah commits itself to the destruction of Israel, the expulsion of Israelis and Western powers from Lebanon, and the removal of “American hegemony in our land.”⁶

According to a 2007 Department of State report, “Hizballah remains the most technically capable terrorist group in the world.”⁷ Beyond its espoused focus on Lebanon, it is linked to terrorist operations in Argentina, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Thailand and has established cells in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia.⁸

Its 25-year history includes some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in modern time, including the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, which precipitated the withdrawal of American forces from Lebanon in 1984, an event seen by jihadists as a model for anti-Western operations. “Hizballah may be the ‘A-team’ of terrorists and maybe al Qaeda is actually the B-team,”

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argues former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. “They have a blood debt to us and we’re not going to forget it.”⁹

A Deadly History

Prior to September 11, 2001, Hizballah was credited with killing more Americans than any other terrorist group, including at least seven Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers.¹⁰ As an organization, it continually improves its operational capability, demonstrates organizational and tactical skill, and has a high degree of proficiency with high-tech weaponry. Hizballah has teamed with state intelligence agencies, primarily those of Iran and Syria, and has aligned itself with other terrorist organizations in order to further its political and military goals. Hizballah is ruthless, versatile, and intelligent and constantly strives to improve military capabilities.

While al Qaeda has been the primary focus of American policymakers in recent years, Hizballah has proven itself to have global reach and staying power. It is credited as the first terrorist group to pioneer the use of suicide bombers as a weapon of mass destruction, delivering large vehicle bombs to specific targets.¹¹ It has recently shown technological prowess through the use of explosive-laden unmanned aircraft and missile technology, even managing to cripple an Israeli warship.¹² The success of the organization is partially rooted in its financial and logistical backing by Iran and Syria.

Hizballah is making inroads within the Iraqi Shi’ite population and has trained an estimated 2,000 Iraqi Shi’ite militia in Lebanon and Iran. On Iran’s behalf, it is assisting radical Iraqi Shi’ites in organizing groups based on the Hizballah template, a move that directly contributes to the destabilization of Iraq and deaths of coalition forces.¹³ It has established relationships in the Horn of Africa, primarily in Sudan and Somalia, and even managed to recruit an estimated 720 Somali Islamist fighters to augment its forces in the 2006 fight against Israel.¹⁴ Indeed, Hizballah’s reach and influence are at a new zenith.

Hearts and Minds—The Hizballah Way

Hizballah maintains a positive image in Lebanese Shi’ite communities by providing educational facilities and services, medical care and hospitals, housing for the poor, and a “news” service through radio and satellite television. Each part of the movement supports the others. Hizballah’s access to money continues to grow; it

now receives an annual budget estimated at \$200 million from Iran.¹⁵ In the aftermath of Hizballah’s war with Israel in 2006, Iran provided the organization between \$600 million and \$700 million for the rebuilding of Shi’ite communities to maintain its public support, deliberately undercutting Western humanitarian inroads into those communities.¹⁶ Hizballah is estimated to have paid out as much as \$180 million in cash directly to community members who were made homeless from Israeli attacks in Shi’ite areas.¹⁷

Much like the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Hizballah maintains a political wing and a military component. In the 2005 Lebanese general election, its political party affiliates won 35 seats, representing 27 percent of the Lebanese parliament.¹⁸ Its political involvement has been encouraged by the West in the hope that, like the IRA, it would move from violence to democratic principles.

To complement its civic contributions, Hizballah’s propaganda machine pushes its agenda under the guise of news programming through its satellite television operation, Al-Manar, its radio station, Al-Nour, and the parent company, Lebanese Media Group. These broadcast outlets promote Hizballah’s image, encourage anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli sentiments, and voice support for Iranian and Syrian foreign policy objectives. Israel and the United States are the primary targets of criticism and propaganda by Al-Manar broadcasts.

In remarks broadcast on Al-Manar, Hizballah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, stated, “Our enmity to the Great Satan is complete and unlimited. . . . Our echoing slogan will remain: Death to America!”¹⁹ One Al-Manar video portrays the United States through an altered image of the Statue of Liberty, transforming the statue into a frightening ghoul that carries a knife instead of a liberty torch and drips blood from its gown. The voiceover states that America “has pried into the affairs of most countries in the world” and that “America owes blood to all of humanity.”²⁰ In the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Al-Manar aired another video calling the United States the “mother of terrorism” and urged attacks against the “invaders” with “rifles and suicide bombers.”²¹

In 2004, France banned Al-Manar’s broadcasts through the European satellite, Eutelsat, citing rampant anti-Semitism, including a broadcast in which a speaker accused Israel of deliberately disseminating AIDS throughout Arab nations.²² Within days of France’s ruling, the U.S. State Department

followed by adding Al-Manar to its Terrorism Exclusion List, preventing American communications satellites from relaying Hizballah broadcasts.

Hizballah uses broadcast entities to earn advertising revenue, promote its charities, and request donations through its accompanying Web site. As a result, in 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department designated Hizballah’s broadcasting arm as a terrorist entity, thus preventing financial support and monetary transactions between U.S. citizens and Hizballah media outlets.²³ In a subsequent statement, the Treasury Department added, “Any entity maintained by a terrorist group, whether masquerading as a charity, a business, or a media outlet, is as culpable as the terrorist group itself.”²⁴ Al-Manar continues its broadcast operations in the Middle East, Africa, some parts of Europe, and via the Internet.

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The Hizballah–al Qaeda Nexus

Due to their long history of religious animosity and distrust, Sunni and Shi’ite terrorist groups do not normally get along. However, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) alleges that in the 1990s, al Qaeda, a Sunni-based group, “put aside its differences with the Shi’ite Muslim terrorist organizations, including the government of Iran and its affiliated terrorist group, Hizballah, to cooperate against the perceived common enemy, the United States and its allies.”²⁵ Also in the 1990s, Osama bin Laden met with Hizballah’s lead operator, Imad Mughniya, the mastermind behind many of its major operations against U.S. targets throughout the 1980s.²⁶ As a result of this meeting, Hizballah provided explosives and tactical training to al Qaeda operatives. Prior to the attacks on U.S. Embassies in Africa, al Qaeda operatives were sent to Hizballah training camps in Lebanon.²⁷ However, no direct link has been established between the actual Embassy bombings and Hizballah.

The relationship between Hizballah and al Qaeda became public knowledge during the 2000 U.S. court testimony by Ali Mohamed, a former U.S. Army Green Beret who pleaded guilty to conspiring with bin Laden to bomb the two U.S. Embassies in Africa. Mohamed testified that he provided security at a meeting

"between al Qaeda . . . and Iran and Hizballah . . . between Mughniyah, Hizballah's chief, and bin Laden." He also stated that Hizballah had provided explosives and tactical training to al Qaeda operatives, while Iran "used Hizballah to supply explosives."²⁸ Following U.S. investigations into the Embassy bombings, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York indicted bin Laden, charging him with conspiracy to attack U.S. assets, and linked him to other terrorist organizations, including Hizballah.²⁹

Prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, al Qaeda's Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his associates made an alliance with Hizballah with the joint goal of planning a catastrophic terrorist attack against Israel.³⁰ In 2003, the U.S. Treasury named al-Zarqawi and his associates as a specially designated global terrorist entity, claiming he had received "more than \$35,000," likely from Hizballah, in mid-2001 "for work in Palestine."³¹ Hizballah's cooperation with al-Zarqawi reportedly included training in tactics, explosives, money laundering, weapons smuggling, and document forgery.³² However, the Hizballah relationship to al Qaeda appears to have soured and may have ended altogether when al-Zarqawi began his attacks against Iraqi Shi'ite communities in a successful effort to foster sectarian violence.

Hizballah in Iraq

Hizballah is the model for radical Shi'ite elements inside Iraq. The growing links between radical Iraqi Shi'ite groups and Hizballah are visible and alarming. Posters

can now be found in Iraqi Shi'ite communities showing Muqtada al-Sadr, a radical Shi'ite cleric and leader of the Mehdi Army, and Hizballah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, walking side by side. Sadr is shown walking on an American flag, Nasrallah on an Israeli one.³³

"The Iranian Quds Force is using Lebanese Hizballah essentially as a proxy, as a surrogate, in Iraq," said Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, USA, former deputy commander, Multi-National Force-Northwest.³⁴ The Quds Force, a special operations element of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, runs three training camps modeled on Hizballah operations in which groups of 20 to 60 radical Iraqi Shi'ites are trained in the use of improvised explosive devices, indirect fire (mortars and rockets), sniper operations, and insurgent tactics.³⁵

U.S. intelligence officials identified the Quds Force as backing the creation of Iraqi Shi'ite "special groups" based on Hizballah organization and tactics.³⁶ General David Petraeus, USA, commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, testified to Congress that Hizballah created a special unit called Department 2800 to support "the training, arming, funding, and, in some cases, direc-

tion of the [Iraqi Shi'ite] militia extremists by the Iranian Republican Guard Corps' Quds Force."³⁷ Proof of direct Hizballah involve-

Hizballah continues to provide Iran "plausible deniability" on the world stage for terrorist attacks that clearly further Iranian aims

ment in Iraq came in March 2007, through the capture of Ali Mussa Daqduq, considered an elite Hizballah special operations veteran and explosives expert. Daqduq was captured in a coalition raid against Iraqi Shi'ite insurgency leadership, many of whom came from the Mehdi Army.



U.S. Army (Sky M. Laron)

Timeline: Operations Linked or Credited to Hizballah

1982-1990

Lebanon: From 1982 to 1986, Hizballah conducted an estimated 36 suicide attacks against American, French, and Israeli political and military targets, killing over 659.¹ Kidnappings of more than 30 American and European citizens, including William Buckley, a Central Intelligence Agency station chief; David Dodge, president of American University of Beirut; Terry Anderson, Associated Press reporter; Father Martin Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest; and Reverend Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian missionary. Anderson was held the longest (2,454 days), and Buckley was tortured to death.²

1983

Lebanon: Bombing of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63.³ Bombing of U.S. Marine and French forces in Beirut, killing 298, including 241 U.S. Marines and other Servicemembers.⁴

Kuwait: Bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City, killing six. The attack is credited to Al Dawa, an Iranian-backed group, but there is a significant link to Hizballah. One of the bombers, Mustafa Youssef Badreddin, was the cousin and brother-in-law of one of Hizballah's senior officers, Imad Mughniyah.⁵

1984

Kuwait-Iran: Hijacking of Kuwait Airways Flight 221 bound for Pakistan, in which two U.S. Government officials were killed after landing at Tehran airport. Iran claimed its security forces stormed the plane without incident and intended to bring the hijackers to trial. The trial never materialized and Iranian authorities released them.⁶

Lebanon: Bombing of U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut, killing nine.⁷

1985

Greece-Lebanon: Hijacking of TWA Flight 847, resulting in the killing of a U.S. Sailor.⁸ Today, four members of Hizballah—Imad Mughniyah, Hasan Izz-al-Din, Mohammed Hamadei, and Ali Atwa—remain on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of most wanted terrorists for this hijacking.⁹

Iran's Hidden Hand

John Negroponte, former Director of National Intelligence, stated, "At the center of Iran's terrorism strategy is Lebanese Hizballah, which relies on Tehran for a substantial portion of its annual budget, military equipment, and specialized training."³⁸ Prior to 2005, it is estimated that Iran had as many as 2,000 troops inside Lebanon providing direct assistance, training, and possibly high-tech weapons employment for Hizballah units.³⁹ Iranian personnel in Lebanon are now said to number between 15 and 800.⁴⁰ Iran, however, vigorously and consistently disputes any official or direct tie to Hizballah.

Mike Wallace, a reporter for *60 Minutes*, visited Iran to interview President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August of 2006. Wallace asked, "Who supports Hizballah? Who has given Hizballah hundreds of millions of dollars for years?" Ahmadinejad interrupted by asking Wallace, "Are you the representative of the Zionist [Israeli] regime?" and added, "Hizballah is a popular organization in Lebanon, and they are defending their land."⁴¹ Iran's former President Mohammad Khatami stated a similar line of defense in a separate interview: "Hizballah is a Lebanese movement; it has declared itself as such, it defends the territorial integrity of Lebanon. . . . We have close intellectual ties with Hizballah."⁴²

Iranian ties to Hizballah reach far beyond the borders of Lebanon and Iraq. The organization's success in recruiting over 700 Somali Islamists to fight against Israel was underwritten by Iran and Syria.⁴³ A 2006

United Nations report stated, "In exchange for the contribution of the Somali military force [to Hizballah operations in Lebanon], Hizballah arranged for additional support to be given . . . by the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, which was subsequently provided."⁴⁴ As a result of Hizballah arrangements, the Iranians reportedly provided "shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, grenade launchers, machine guns, ammunition, medicine, uniforms and other supplies" to Somali Islamic extremists.⁴⁵

Whether it is driving the United States out of Lebanon in the 1980s or out of Iraq in the new millennium, Hizballah continues to provide Iran "plausible deniability" on the world stage for terrorist attacks that clearly further Iranian aims. Hizballah's inroads into other regions, including the Western Hemisphere, provide Iran a global reach through the Hizballah network. Despite evidence of its linkage to the terrorist group, Iran has never received any meaningful retribution from the international community or the United States for its sponsorship of Hizballah.

Trouble in Our Own Backyard

Hizballah's attacks against Israeli targets in Argentina in the 1990s demonstrate the organization's capability to conduct operations in the Western Hemisphere. In 1999, a Hizballah operative, Sobhi Mahmoud Fayad, was arrested for surveillance of the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion, Paraguay.⁴⁶ Hizballah also has organized cells in South America's "tri-border"

area, a remote jungle region bordering Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. It has focused its past South American recruiting efforts on the estimated 25,000 Arabs living in the tri-border area who fled Lebanon during the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 and the Lebanese civil war.⁴⁷

The tri-border region is a lawless, unregulated area in which smuggling is the staple trade, and where Hizballah agents of Middle Eastern descent can move freely. Because they have Latin American passports and speak Spanish, they are able to travel easily through Central and South America. A U.S. Southern Command study estimated that between \$300 million and \$500 million was raised by groups affiliated with terrorist organizations in South America—with operations including drug trade, sham businesses, smuggling, and charities.⁴⁸ Louis Freeh, former Director of the FBI, called the tri-border area a "free zone for significant criminal activity, including people who are organized to commit acts of terrorism."⁴⁹

Another area of U.S. concern comes from the growing ties between Venezuela and Iran, particularly because the former could provide a location from which Hizballah could train, supply, and launch attacks against targets in the Western Hemisphere, as it did in Argentina in the 1990s. Venezuela and Iran are the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC's) fifth and second largest members, respectively, and account for 20 percent of OPEC's oil production.⁵⁰ Using oil as a weapon by favoring policies that drive up the price is a key to this relationship, as higher oil prices fill state coffers and undermine the oil-dependent

1992

Argentina: Bombing of Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29.¹⁰

1994

Argentina: Bombing of Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association in Buenos Aires, killing 100 and wounding 200.¹¹

Thailand: On March 17, Hizballah attempted to bomb the Israeli embassy in Bangkok, but the attack failed when the terrorists got into a car accident, fled, and left the explosives in the car.¹²

1996

Saudi Arabia: Bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Dhahran, killing 19 U.S. military personnel and wounding 515.¹³

Lebanon-Israel: Israel and Hizballah battle for 16 days, killing at least 137, mostly Lebanese civilians.¹⁴

1997

Singapore: Singapore authorities thwarted plans to blow up U.S. Navy ships passing through the Singapore Straits or berthed in a Singapore harbor.¹⁵

2006

Lebanon-Israel: Hizballah conducted the Zar'it-Shtula cross-border attack on an Israeli military patrol, kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and sparking the 2006 Lebanon war. After 34 days of ground fighting, an estimated 1,000 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and 159 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed.¹⁶ The war was trumpeted as a "victory" over Israel by Iran, Syria, and others.¹⁷ Hizballah units launched an estimated 3,970 rockets into Israel, killing 43 civilians and wounding 1,489.¹⁸

2006 to present

Iraq: The United States estimates that between 1,000 and 2,000 radical Iraqi Shi'ite militia members were trained in Lebanon by Hizballah in 2006.¹⁹

U.S. economy. Oil provides an economic incentive for cooperation, but both countries view their alliance as a strategic stand against U.S. influence.

"Chavez sees himself and Ahmadinejad as brothers defining a strategic anti-U.S. alliance that is part of an ambitious and well-structured global project," commented Alberto Garrido, a Venezuelan political analyst.⁵¹ Demonstrating solidarity, Iran awarded Chavez its highest state medal for its support against the United States and Western powers as Iran moves forward in developing nuclear technology.⁵² The Venezuelan government produced posters showing Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Iran's President Ahmadinejad in an embrace with the slogan "Axis of Unity," a stab at President George W. Bush's "axis of evil." In a joint appearance by the presidents in Iran, Ahmadinejad commented:

*We do not have any limitation in cooperation. Iran and Venezuela are next to each other and supporters of each other. Chavez is a source of a progressive and revolutionary current in South America and his stance in restricting imperialism is tangible.*⁵³

The United States is not immune to Hizballah operations within its own borders. Another growing concern among U.S. security agencies is the possibility of terrorists using the U.S.-Mexican border as a preferred transit point. The CIA has become increasingly alarmed by that prospect. One example of

this vulnerability is the 2002 arrest of Salim Boughader Mucharrafi, a Lebanese restaurateur who smuggled an estimated 200 Lebanese nationals into the United States. Some of those entrants had connections to Hizballah, including one who had worked for the organization's television network.⁵⁴ As a result, the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center wrote a 2004 threat paper noting:

*Many alien smuggling networks that facilitate the movement of non-Mexicans have established links to Muslim communities in Mexico. . . . Non-Mexicans often are more difficult to intercept because they typically pay high-end smugglers a large sum of money to efficiently assist them across the border, rather than haphazardly traverse it on their own.*⁵⁵

in 2006, U.S. law enforcement agencies and the FBI focused on Hizballah sleeper cells in Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York

In 2006, U.S. law enforcement agencies and the FBI focused on Hizballah sleeper cells in major cities, including Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York. Concerns were also noted about Iranian mission representatives at the United Nations in New York City, where there have been three incidents since 2002 of Iranian diplomats and security guards being

"expelled" by the United States for surveillance and photography of the subway system and other possible targets.⁵⁶ U.S. officials said of the Iranian expulsions, "We cannot think of any reason for this activity other than this was reconnaissance for some kind of potential targeting for terrorists."⁵⁷

Additionally, a 2003 criminal investigation in Charlotte, North Carolina, resulted in charges against 25 people for a variety of criminal enterprises, including cigarette smuggling, money laundering, credit card fraud, marriage fraud, and immigration violations. Four were charged with providing "material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization [Hizballah]," and it was noted that they provided "currency, financial services, training, false documentation and identification, communications equipment, explosives, and other physical assets to Hizballah, in order to facilitate its violent attacks."⁵⁸ Another five suspects remain as fugitives. One FBI agent knowledgeable of the Charlotte case stated:

*Here's a terrorist support cell that sets itself up in America's heartland. They have the ability to move people across borders and give them whole new identities. They have access to a constant flow of untraced cash, military training, and a network of criminal contacts to get weapons. That's not good news.*⁵⁹

U.S. and Canadian court documents show that Hizballah members in both countries have tried to procure military equipment, including laser-range finders, aircraft software, global positioning gear, night-vision goggles, blasting equipment, and mine detection machinery.⁶⁰ Left unchecked, Hizballah could set up a network of fundraising, support, and operational terrorist cells in the United States that could activate for a strike at a later date. FBI officials testified to Congress in 2002 that "investigations to date continue to indicate that many Hizballah subjects based in the United States have the capability to attempt terrorist attacks here should this be a desired objective of the group."⁶¹ Of the FBI's 24 Most Wanted Terrorists, 8 are affiliated with Hizballah.⁶²

For its part, the FBI announced on September 30, 2007, that it will become more focused and specialized in its approach to terrorist groups, specifically mentioning Hizballah. The bureau has begun the largest, most comprehensive reorganization of its counterterrorism division since 2001. This change in structure is designed to help the



Explosives expert displays devices, including allegedly Iranian-made bombs, used by Iraqi militants

AP/Wide World Photo (Wahiq Khuzale)

Federal Government improve its detection of global terrorist group collaboration efforts and identify new ways to target and disrupt the larger, networked terrorist activities.⁶³

The Road Ahead

Hizballah's credibility has grown substantially as a result of its success in its 2006 war with Israel and its growing financial and military support from Iran. The reality is clear: the organization has the expertise, networks, and motivation to conduct attacks against U.S. targets at home and overseas. While al Qaeda may have moved to the top of the list for counterterrorism policymakers due to the 9/11 attacks, Hizballah remains the most capable terrorist organization in the world.

Moreover, the success of Hizballah in its 2006 war with Israel should justifiably alarm military and counterterrorism analysts. This 34-day operation displayed Hizballah as a highly competent military organization, skilled in the use of high-tech weaponry and knowledgeable of Western-style tactics. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's analysis of Hizballah's paramilitary capabilities provides a cautionary note:

*What should stand out for U.S. Military planners and policymakers as they study the July War [against Israel in 2006] is the simple fact that an army fighting with largely U.S. equipment and American-style tactics struggled greatly—or was at the very least perceived to have struggled greatly—in its conflict with Hizballah. Thus, enemies of the United States are highly likely to seek to emulate Hizballah's preparations, tactics, and performance on the battlefield. For that reason, U.S. strategists should attempt to distill from the recent conflict as many military lessons as possible.*⁶⁴

Because it furthers its foreign policy aims without any meaningful penalty from the international community, it is safe to assume that Iran will continue to provide significant financial and military support. Hizballah provides Iran a means of changing U.S. behavior, as it did in Lebanon by blowing up the Marine barracks in 1983, facilitating an American withdrawal.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force will continue to use Hizballah as a proxy in Iraq. If it has not already done so, Hizballah may expand operations into Afghanistan and other regions in support of Iranian foreign policy objectives. In 2006, a senior North Atlantic Treaty Organization official likened

tactics of Taliban insurgents to those of Hizballah.⁶⁵ While no direct evidence currently exists that the organization is involved in Afghanistan, it would not be surprising to find it in some kind of training or advisory role to insurgent forces there, much as it is doing in Iraq.

Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, provides this assessment: "Lebanese Hizballah, which has conducted anti-U.S. attacks outside the United States in the past, may be more likely to consider attacking the homeland over the next three years if it perceives the United States as posing a direct threat to the group or Iran."⁶⁶ U.S. policymakers must focus efforts on Hizballah inroads into the Western Hemisphere to prevent potential attacks in the United States by Hizballah operatives.

General Yahya Rahim Safavi, leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, claims, "America will receive a heavier punch from the guards in the future. . . . We will never remain silent in the face of U.S. pressure and we will use our leverage against them."⁶⁷ The "punch" and "leverage" Safavi speaks of might well be provided by Hizballah either overseas or in the American homeland. **JFQ**

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¹³ Gordon and Filkins.

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